



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**May 29, 2012**

**176<sup>th</sup> Wing begins largest deployment since 2003**  
***Complete combat rescue package to support coalition efforts***

**JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska** – More than 180 citizen-Airmen of the Alaska Air National Guard's 176 Wing have begun deploying for Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The deployment marks the wing's single largest deployment of personnel since 2003. It will be the wing's second large-scale deployment from JBER since the Guard organization relocated here in February 2011 as part of the Base Realignment and Closure process.

The deploying Airmen are primarily maintenance crews from the wing's 176 Maintenance Group and rescue personnel from the wing's three rescue units: HH-60 "Pave Hawk" helicopter pilots and crew from the 210th Rescue Squadron; HC-130 "Hercules" pilots and crew from the 211th; and pararescuemen and combat rescue officers from the 212th. Together with a handful of Expeditionary Combat Support personnel from other 176th Wing units, the deployers form a highly capable and versatile rescue package.

In Afghanistan, the rescuers will pursue their primary wartime mission of combat search and rescue. This often involves challenging casualty-evacuation missions – that is, flying into "hot" combat zones, frequently under fire, to pull wounded coalition service members to safety and transport them to a treatment facility within one hour. The maintenance crews will support this vital work by keeping the rescuers' planes and helicopters ready for flight at a moment's notice.

"We are very, very proud of our deploying men and women," said the wing's commander, Col. Scott Wenke. "These are highly trained and motivated professionals who will do an outstanding job in support of coalition efforts to help the Afghan people build a better future for their country. I thank them for their service and look forward to their safe return."

Since 1952, the 176 Wing has effectively served Alaskans at home and American interests abroad. It has supported large-scale deployments each year since 2003. The wing currently has more than 50 civil engineers, security personnel and other expeditionary combat Airmen deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

One of the largest and busiest wings in the Air National Guard, the 176 Wing also provides alert rescue and air defense capabilities in support of the 11th Air Force and Alaska NORAD Region.

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## **Cutlines:**

120519-Z-MO053-009

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska - Senior Airman Donald Haretuku, an aircrew flight equipment specialist for the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Operations Support Squadron, plays the guitar and sings with family and friends while waiting to depart Alaska for Afghanistan May 28, 2012. More than 180 members of the Alaska Air National Guard's 176 Wing are deploying for about four months in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. (Alaska Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Shannon Oleson)

120519-Z-MO053-023

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska - Master Sgt. Dennis Mobley, a helicopter crew chief with the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, spends some quality time with his daughter Kailee and his wife, Heidi, while waiting to depart Alaska for Afghanistan May 28, 2012. More than 180 members of the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing are deploying for about four months in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. (Alaska Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Shannon Oleson)

120519-Z-MO053-025

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska - Airman 1st Class Steven Wahl, a helicopter crew chief with the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, kisses his mom, Kim, and wraps his arm around his sister, Karissa, as he prepares to leave for Afghanistan May 28, 2012. Wahl is flanked by his father, Nick, and his cousin, Tiffany Stroman. More than 180 members of the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing are deploying for about four months in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. (Alaska Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Shannon Oleson)

120519-Z-MO053-027

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska - Members of the Alaska Air National Guard's 176 Wing load an HH-60 "Pave Hawk" search and rescue helicopter onto a C-17 "Globemaster III" for a four-month deployment to Afghanistan May 28, 2012. The helicopter is a part of a package of equipment and crew that is deploying in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. (Alaska Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Shannon Oleson)

120519-Z-NW557-002

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska - Members of the Alaska Air National Guard's 176 Wing load an HH-60 "Pave Hawk" search and rescue helicopter onto a C-17 "Globemaster III" for a four-month deployment to Afghanistan May 28, 2012. The helicopter is a part of a package of equipment and crew that is deploying in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. (Alaska Air National Guard photo by Capt. John Callahan)

120528-Z-NW557-040

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska - Deploying members of the Alaska Air National Guard's 176 Wing shake hands with their commander, Col. Scott Wenke, as they board a C-17 for Afghanistan May 28, 2012. More than 180 members of the wing are deploying to Afghanistan for about four months in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. (Alaska Air National Guard photo by Capt. John Callahan)